

## The Senior Center Certification Process at a Glance

### Purpose

- Improve the quality of senior centers
- Recognize excellence that exists
- Provide a guide for developing activities and services that respond to consumers' wishes

### Benefits

#### To older adults and their families

- A voice in program development
- Enhanced performance of center staff
- Greater variety of activities and services

#### To the community

- Optimum use of resources
- Focal point for community activities
- Prestige of having a certified center

#### To the center

- Increased consumer satisfaction
- Blueprint for development and measurable outcomes for grant proposals
- Meets Home and Community Care Block Grant standards
- Public recognition
- Potential for drawing state funds



*Photos taken at senior centers in  
Wilmington and Garland, NC.  
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## North Carolina Senior Center Certification Process



**Sponsored by the Division  
of Aging and Adult Services**  
NC Department of Health  
and Human Services

# North Carolina Senior Center Certification Process



**SENIOR CENTERS** can be convenient locations in the community for older adults to gather; participate in recreational, educational, and health-promoting activities; and obtain information about other community programs and services.

Because senior centers in North Carolina are in various stages of development, and because many communities do not yet have them, in fall 1998, the Division of Aging and Adult Services assembled a task force for senior center development, composed of senior center directors, representatives from Area Agencies on Aging, older adults, the division, the NC Institute on Aging, and the Center for Aging Research and Educational Services (CARES). Its charge was to develop a standard for best practice in senior center operations.



## Centers of Merit and Centers of Excellence

The task force identified a model with two tiers—the Center of Merit and the Center of Excellence—and best practices for five major operational areas

- outreach and access to services
- programs and activities
- planning, evaluation, and input from older adults
- staffing
- operations and physical plant.

## Self-Evaluation and Site Visits

The task force also established a process by which centers could complete a self-evaluation, ask to be reviewed by independent site visitors, and receive



certification at the level of Merit or Excellence from the Division of Aging and Adult Services, based on the recommendation of the site review team. They also negotiated minimum standards for each level of certification.

**CENTERS OF MERIT** meet all the requirements of the Home and Community Care Block Grant and are providers of very high quality services.

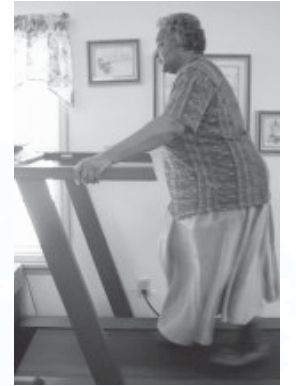
**CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE** provide exemplary services and opportunities to their communities and serve as mentors and models to developing centers.

Certification is a voluntary process that senior centers can use to be recognized in their communities and across the state. Its purpose is to strengthen the capacity of senior centers by providing a set of measurable indicators of best practice. The self-evaluation tool also provides a framework for planning development and seeking resources from the community, the state, and other sources.

## Help for Interested Centers

Steve Freedman, Leslee Breen, and Judy Smith, of the Division of Aging and Adult Services, provide consultation, as do Area Agencies on Aging.

Under contract with the Division, CARES (part of the Jordan Institute for Families, School of Social Work at UNC-Chapel Hill; <http://ssw.unc.edu/cares/cares.htm>) provides training on the certification process and on using the self-evaluation tool as a blueprint for building capacity and enhancing quality.



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